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MANAGEMENT COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

U. S. Department of Agriculture

A summary of significant events of interest to USDA management

Issue #59 April 18, 1977

SENATE CONFIRMATIONS....On April 6, the Senate confirmed, by voice vote, the following nominations for Assistant Secretary: Rural Development - Alex Mercure; Conservation, Research and Education - M. Rupert Cutler; International Affairs and Commodity Programs - Dale Hathaway; Marketing - Robert H. Meyer. (Contact: John Mottershead, OMF, ext. 74654)

BUILDING SECURITY.....USDA employees or visitors are no longer required to show identification when entering Washington complex buildings unless the buildings are under an alert imposed by the Federal Protective Service. The guards will continue to keep all persons entering or leaving the building under observation for suspicious packages and removal of government property.

Under an alert situation, one or all of the following security measures may be applied: (1) Package will be searched. (2) South Building court gates will be locked. (3) Certain perimeter doors will be secured. (Contact: Edith McNeil, OI, ext. 76891)

FEDERAL BUILDINGS FUND.....Federal Buildings Fund (FBF) budget estimates for FY 1979 have been received. The total FBF estimate for the Department is \$80,924,535 for 16,256,449 square feet of space; an average of \$4.86 per assigned square foot. This is 12¢ per assigned square foot more than the FY 1978 figure based upon payment of \$74,315,037 for 15,253,024 square feet. (Contact: Margaret Caswell, 00, ext. 75225)

GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE INVOICES....Approximately 49% of the \$544,000 October 27, 1976, balance of outstanding invoices (61 days or older) have been paid by the agencies as of February 22. Information received from agencies indicates additional payments made to GPO were in transit as of February 22.

Agencies have provided excellent staff cooperation and have made a timely response in reducing these invoices. (Contact: Leo Palensky, OMF, ext. 77251)

FLEXITIME IN ARS....ARS is implementing a test of flexitime in 10 field offices. These offices represent a cross section of ARS activities and include small, medium and large locations covering office, laboratory and field-type activities. Employees will select the option they prefer from three alternatives: (1) fixed preschedule, (2) modified preschedule and (3) modified gliding schedule. The alternative selected must meet the needs of the office or research involved. An assessment of attitudes and productivity will be made at the end of a 6-12 month period. (Contact: Gail Sedgwick, ARS, ext. 73801)

NATIONAL FINANCE CENTER NEWS.....

...NFC Orientation - In a joint effort with Department fiscal, accounting and personnel officials, a plan is being developed for providing regular technical orientation sessions for agency personnel at NFC. Separate orientation sessions will be conducted for the (a) payroll/personnel system and (b) administrative payment and accounting systems. General information, tentative agendas and nominating procedures for these sessions have been provided to Deputy Administrators for Management for review and comment. These sessions will begin in June.

... <u>Gasoline Credit Cards</u> - The NFC has obtained 10,000 blank credit cards from the GSA supplier and arrangements have been made for the ASCS Kansas City Commodity Office to produce the embossed cards starting in June. This system will provide the capability to fill requests for new or replacement cards without the delays experienced in the past.

... Telephone System - Three additional lines have been added to the Inquiry Section and five more lines are planned within the month. These lines, with the 4 additional FTS circuits recently installed, should minimize blocked calls and busy signals. The 20-line rotary system in the Inquiry Section and the 27 FTS circuits for the NFC should provide adequate telephone service.

KANSAS CITY COMPUTER CENTER (KCCC) DELEGATION OF PROCUREMENT AUTHORITY

RECEIVED.....USDA received a DPA on April 8, for competitively acquired equipment to be installed at the KCCC. (Contact: R. Long, ADS, ext. 74789)

SOFTWARE PRODUCTIVITY IMPROVEMENT.....ADS has recently initiated a procurement action for a software system processor. The requirements for this software package were developed jointly with agency personnel who identified a need for the capability. The package will cost approximately \$2,000 per month and is expected to produce a \$174,000 savings based on currently identified applications that will be developed with the use of the software system processors. A software system processor automatically performs those tasks that tend to be the most time consuming and error prone. (Contact: R. Williams, ADS, ext. 72118)

STATUS OF APPLICATIONS REVIEW BOARD....As a result of last year's Management Council meeting in Gettysburg, Pa., a Department-wide ADP MBO was developed. A significant part of this objective was the establishment by selected agencies of Applications Review Boards. These Review Boards were to be constituted by October 1976 and a review of current and future agency application systems subsequently initiated. As of April 11, 11 of the 13 selected agencies have review boards--only FmHA and FNS have no, but plan to do so. Three agencies have finalized directives concerning operations of the board, 5 others have directives in draft form. Seven of the 13 agencies have already held meetings. Another status report will be prepared at the end of June. (Contact: R. Head, ADS, ext. 77543)

FORMS AND PUBLICATIONS TASK FORCE STUDY.....The study on the production, storage and distribution of USDA's diversified forms and publications programs has been completed in final draft form. Copies are being submitted to Management Council members for review. This study will be discussed at the April 28 meeting of the Management Council. (Contact: Tom Foster, 00 ext. 78393)

<u>FLEXITIME</u>....There is increasing interest throughout the government in implementing flexitime systems. EPA and Geological Survey of Interior are two of the major users. Within this Department, ERS began a 6-month trial implementation on January 31.

Two bills have recently been introduced into the House "to authorize Federal agencies to experiment with flexible and compressed employee work schedules."

...H.R. 2732 requires that within 180 days after the effective date of the act, "each agency shall establish a program which provides for the conducting of one or more experiments" to implement a program of flexible scheduling of work hours and/or a 4-day work week or other compressed work schedule.

...H.R. 2930 requires that the Civil Service Commission shall "establish a master plan which shall contain guidelines and criteria by which the Commission will approve and evaluate experiments to be conducted

by agencies."

The basic provisions of the two Acts are similar regarding computation of premium pay, permitting use of time-recording devices, accumulating of credit hours, etc.

CSC has prepared a 16-page booklet providing step-by-step guidelines for determining the feasibility and implementation of flexitime. They can be ordered from the Superintendent of Documents, G.P.O. The number is Catalog #CS 1.7/4:F63, Stock #006-000-00809-7. The cost is 65¢ each. (Contact: Neil Van Vliet, OMF, ext. 75301)

FY 1977 SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATION....Conference action on the 1977 Supplemental Appropriations Bill has been completed and Congress has:

...Added \$3.3 million above the Department's estimate to provide Federal financing of startup costs for this year to implement the new Grain Inspection Act.

...Approved the Department's estimate of \$5.4 million for the Pesticide

Impact Assessment Program.

... Approved the \$619,000 requested for the new Packer Bonding Law.

...Approved additional FCIC capital stock of \$10 million and a further \$50 million contingent on the enactment of the Administration's proposed legislation.

...Approved the drought supplemental submitted by the Administration. This includes funds for Water and Sewer Grants (\$75 million), Water and Sewer Loans (\$150 million), and Agricultural Conservation Program (\$100 million). The conferees provided that the ACP money will be available for flood losses as well as drought losses.

...Provided funds above the budget for research and control programs including Pseudorabies (\$300,000), Citrus Blackfly (\$1.1 million), Mediterranean

Fruit Fly (\$4.1 million) and Range Caterpillar (\$500,000).

...Provided \$119 million above the budget for the Forest Service, primarily for youth conservation corps, road construction, recreation, and timber sales.

...Approved our proposed supplemental of \$720 million for the Food Stamp

Program

The Congress is expected to pass this bill shortly after returning from the Easter recess on April 18. (Contact: Bob Sherman, OMF, ext. 76176)

ZERO-BASED BUDGETING (ZBB)....The Department is now implementing a ZBB system and a working draft of detailed technical instructions has been issued to agency budget offices for review and comment. Official instructions have not been issued in final form by OMB; however, OMF has been working closely with OMB to assure that USDA's ZBB is consistent with the anticipated requirements.

The following principal steps will be used in the FY 1979 ZBB process: (1) identification of decision units and decision packages, (2) preparation of decision packages and supporting data and (3) review and ranking of decision packages. Agency inputs will require clear, concise data regarding program objectives and accomplishments and related fund and manpower resources. (Contact: Bob Sherman, OMF, ext. 76176)

AGRICULTURE MANAGEMENT PLANNING SEMINAR (AMPS)....In response to agencies requests, ten sessions of AMPS have been scheduled for various cities throughout the country in FY 1978. This 36-hour program is designed to provide managers at mid-career level (GS-13-15) an opportunity to review and plan career goals. Of six sessions scheduled for FY 1977, five have already been held. The remaining FY 1977 session will be held in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida on June 20-24. AMPS is the only course of its type in the Federal Government. (Contact: Tom Gill, OP, ext. 74258)

COOPERATIVE EDUCATION....An expanded listing of colleges and universities with substantial minority enrollment has been developed to supplement agency minority recruitment and cooperative education programs. The list identifies 429 colleges and universities having 500 or more Black students, 200 or more Hispanic students and 50 or more American Indian students. Approximately 196 schools on the list have cooperative education programs. The Department's EEO Committee is developing alternative approaches to realizing greater minority participation in USDA's CEP. (Contact: Jetie B. Wilds, FS, ext. 78441)

FAS "ZERO BASE" RESOURCES REVIEW.....The Foreign Agricultural Service developed a "zero-base" budget presentation for FY 1977 and 1978. This presentation provides a structure of FAS objectives, activities and resources requirements for two fiscal years. The approach involves management through the branch chief level and includes a thorough reexamination of agency objectives, the development of priority categories for agency activities, and a reassessment and reallocation of people and dollar resources. FAS is now utilizing this approach for day-to-day management of the agency and in briefings for Assistant Secretary Hathaway. (Contact: John Williams, FAS, ext. 74868)

NEWSLETTER ARTICLES.....Your response to our request for articles was encouraging. In fact, we received more items than we could include in the last issue; others are included in this issue. Thanks! Let's have more. After all this is "our" communicative vehicle through which we keep informed of management happenings in USDA. Please note that the telpehone number of Neil Van Vliet and Edwardene Rees has been changed to Ext. 76111.